Foundations of College Writing

Dr. Sherry

Portfolio Synthesis Letter

Chira Husky

This semester, in Foundations of College Writing, I have worked toward five goals for my writing. Below, I list each of these goals and provide examples of how I have made progress toward them. I draw my examples mainly from the three projects we did: in the first project, I researched an aspect of college culture by reading other studies and collecting interview and observation data; in the second project, I transformed the results of my research into three different genres for three different audiences; in the third project, I wrote a personal narrative about my own experiences related to the same topic and about the main focus of the course—what it means to be educated.

**Goal A. Students will be able to compose for particular audiences and purposes.**

In my research project, I investigated how mathematics instruction differs from high school to college and how students and teachers in both places perceive that instruction. When I wrote my professional conference presentation slideshow, my audience was fellow researchers, and my purpose was to extend and challenge the existing research in this area. I did this in my slideshow by first including previous research and explaining how it informed the design of my own interviews/observations and also the analysis of my data.

INSERT SLIDESHOW

I used this approach because it is shows an audience of Social Science researchers that I know how to build on others’ studies in order to design my own study and analyze my data.

In my second project, I transformed the results of my research into a magazine article for teachers about how students learn math in different ways and how important it is to differentiate instruction. Because this audience and purpose differed from my research paper, I used a much different organization.

INSERT MAG ARTICLE

Instead of including background from other research and a description of my methods, which only researchers would be interested in, I described the problem and then used key quotes from one teacher. For example, I wrote, “’Students learn in all different ways, and you have to provide for each way,’ says Jeff Stover, a math teacher for 25 years, ‘You can't do the same thing every day. The most effective teachers use a combination of techniques.’ Stover continues to explain how he tries to incorporate different styles in the way they practice problems during class.” Instead of relating this data back to other research, I gave concrete activities that practicing teachers would want to use, like including visuals and pictures or in-class time for practice problems.

In this way, I transformed the results of my first project, which was meant to extend previous research for other researchers, into a magazine article for an audience of fellow teachers who might be more interested in practical applications.

**B. Students will be able to compose using language and conventions appropriate to genre.**

For my research project, I chose to create a professional presentation of the kind I might present at a research conference. Even though the genre I used was not a paper, I still used the same conventions of a Social Science research article. For example, I first stated the Problem I would focus on, then I gave Background from previous research, next I explained how my Methods drew on that previous research, and finally, I analyzed my data and drew some conclusions. For example, I wrote:

* This is not the first study on student-teacher interaction. In her study, *My Freshman Year,* Dr. RebekahNathan, a professor for 15 years, decided to study college life by enrolling as a student at her own university.
* Chapter 4 of *My Freshman Year* focused on international students and how they viewed American culture. Nathan asked the international students about teachers, and this is what she found:
  + **Quote:** “U.S. professors were described by different international students as ‘laid-back,’ ‘helpful,’ ‘open,’ ‘tolerant’ (of scant clothing and sleeping in class), ‘casual,’ and ‘friendly,” (Nathan, 2005, pg. 78).

A review of previous research is something that stands out as particular to the Social Science research genre. I also cited the previous research using APA style, which gives the author and the date to show how current the research is. This example shows that I am able to use the conventional headings of the Social Science research article in a way that is appropriate to that genre and recognizable to a researcher audience.